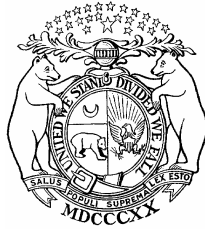


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**REPORT SHOWS MISSOURI'S USE OF RECOMMENDED SENTENCES
REDUCES RECIDIVISM RATES, PRISON POPULATION**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Bucking a state and national trend, Missouri's prison population and recidivism rates among offenders have dropped substantially since the state began using a system of recommended sentences statewide two years ago, a new report by the Missouri Sentencing Advisory Commission shows.

Since November 2005, the commission's recommended sentences – and the Department of Corrections' method of analyzing risks of re-offending – were incorporated into the pre-sentence reports that probation officers make to the courts. In the year before the new system was implemented, Missouri's prison population increased by 855, culminating in an all-time-high prison population of more than 30,650 in October 2005.

Since November 2005, however, the prison population has decreased by nearly 810, according to the August 2007 population figures in the commission's 2007 biennial report. Since August, the prison population has continued to decline; as of the end of September, the prison population was just less than 29,790, or about 865 less than November 2005.

The Department of Corrections, whose probation officers prepare sentencing assessment reports for the courts, also attributes the reduction in the prison population to lower recidivism rates because of the success of newly introduced reentry programs and to revised probation and parole supervision practices.

The commission's new report contains the first study of recidivism based on its system of recommended sentences. The study found that there are fewer repeat offenders when the actual sentences given by courts agree with the recommended sentences.

Commission Members:

Judge Michael A. Wolff, Chair, Jack Banas, Judge Richard Callahan, Larry Crawford, Larry J. Joiner,
Mark D. Mittleman, Representative Danielle Moore, Rob Robinson, Ph.D.

"The study confirms statistically what we intuitively believed – that public safety is enhanced when judges statewide follow the recommended sentences," said Michael A. Wolff, Supreme Court judge and chairman of the Sentencing Advisory Commission. "The data reflect the successful results of cooperation among Missouri's judiciary, Department of Corrections and Board of Probation and Parole. The commission believes these cooperative efforts are creating an effective and coherent system of sentencing that will continue to enhance public safety and promote the wise use of Missouri's correctional resources."

The system of recommended sentences the commission developed is based on actual sentencing practices of trial judges statewide. In part, the system encourages courts to refer more offenders to 120-day in-prison shock and treatment programs, and to reduce prison sentencing for nonviolent offenders with little prior criminal history. It also requires that probation officers give courts and attorneys, through their sentencing assessment reports, an analysis of the offender's risk factors, strategies for supervising and managing offenders through community-based sanctions or prison-based programs, recommended sentences for the offender, and, where prison is recommended, the parole board's guidelines and practices for paroling offenders in that category.

According to the commission's recidivism study, when the recommended sentence is probation – and the actual sentence is prison – then the recidivism rates are much higher, whether measured by new incarcerations or new convictions. When the actual sentence is probation but the recommended sentence is prison, which occurs in 31 percent of prison recommended sentencing, the recidivism rates are also high, about the same as for prison. The report shows that about 82 percent of the actual sentences given are within the range of recommended sentences.

"The report's data show the importance of the Department of Corrections' work in developing effective community supervision strategies and community-based programs for less dangerous offenders," Director Larry Crawford said. "The successes shown by the data also reflect the dedication of the state's probation officers, who have been providing critical pre-sentence information to courts and attorneys in their sentencing assessment reports for the last two years."

A 2007 U.S. Justice Department report notes that Missouri was one of only eight states whose prison populations declined and that the state's decrease in prison population led the country.

The commission's biennial report includes sentencing data through the end of fiscal 2007 and statutory changes effective Aug. 28, 2007. It also contains a study of recidivism rates and the department's use of the STATIC-99, a risk-assessment tool that better informs judges in sentencing sex offenders.

More information about the Sentencing Advisory Commission may be found online at www.mosac.mo.gov. Its biennial report is on its Web site under "System of Recommended Sentencing" (<http://www.mosac.mo.gov/reportsstudies.htm>).

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